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ABSTRACT

This document presents a book list that results from a national survey of reading program directors and was designed to serve as a guide for starting a personal professional library in reading. Over one-third of the directors identified in the International Reading Association's catalog of graduate reading programs were asked which books they would recommend to a first-year elementary school teacher who wished to establish such a library. The 73 directors or their designates (out of 89 asked) cited 118 titles and made general recommendations such as, "get a good general reference text," or "get an activities book." The suggestion is to use the list of the twenty most frequently cited titles, but to remember that it is based on the responses of a group of experts who probably should be noted for the diversity rather than the unanimity of their opinion. (Author/MAI)

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

A MINIMAL PROFESSIONAL LIBRARY IN ELEMENTARY READING INSTRUCTION: A SURVEY

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A minimal professional library for a beginner is an absolute necessity in most professions. However, in elementary education this demand is not made. Indeed, some universities which have teacher preparation as their major function rent textbooks to pre-service teachers.

It does not seem unreasonable, therefore, to assume that some beginning teachers desire recommendations to guide them in their later purchases of handbooks, etc. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to find extant some recommended "reading"

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book lists for teachers. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English has created lists of recommended books, journals and other resources for its members. (See May, 1975, English Journal, 22-3, and the April, 1976, Language Arts, 459-463.) As one would expect, the NCTE list for elementary language arts contains a "reading" section. The seventeen titles range across measurement, psycholinguistics, and critical reactions to the teahcing of reading. Certainly, the NCTE list is not limited to reading methods books and activities lists.

Professional organizations are not alone in their recommendations. The Indiana Department of Public Instruction published a 275-page document entitled Reading Effectiveness Program/Middle, Junior & Secondary School Guide (1975) in which readings were listed at the end of each chapter. In addition, at least one state department of public instruction has included a "Teachers Basic Bookshelf" (p. 111) in an extended publication entitled So You Want to Start a Reading Skills Center for Secondary Students (Angello, 1975).

If further justification for a recommended reading list were necessary, consider the findings of Shirley (1977):

> Eighty-three percent of the teachers in this study reported that reading had influenced their professional development, ... The majority of the teachers were more influenced by books than by periodicals . . . . The teachers in the youngest age group (20-30) tended to report more total readings of influence than did their older colleagues. Six

> instructional areas influenced by reading . . . emerged . . . approaches to and methods of teaching reading, attitudes towards students, techniques in teaching reading, classroom organization, utilizing reading materials, and use of volunteers and paraprofessionals (pp. 10-11).

But what books would be recommended by our colleagues who may be considered reading experts? And what would be the implications of analyses and comparisons of the recommendations?

Methodology

In order to ascertain what reading experts might consider a minimal professional library in reading instruction for a beginning elementary school teacher, the following question was asked of 36% (N = 89) of 247 program directors or their designated agents listed in International Reading Association's Graduate Programs and Faculty in Reading (1976).

> Which books and/or materials would you recommend to a first-year elementary school teacher who wishes to establish a personal professional library in reading? (Up to five.)

The stratified random sample consisted of approximately one-third of the program directors, for not all states had a number of reading programs which could be divided evenly by three. Therefore, at least one program in all states was surveyed with the remaining program directors randomly selected with the one-third proportion as a guide. For example, seven of the twenty-two reading program directors in New York received the question, while Delaware's single entry was also sent the question.

Findings

The question about recommended reading for a beginning elementary teacher was answered by 73 of the 89 directors of reading programs or their designates. That is a response rate of 82% or, just as importantly, 29% of the 247 reading programs.

The tabulation of responses revealed that 118 different titles were recommended by the 73 respondees. No attempt will be made to present the whole list. However, the frequency tabulation showed that (a) five book titles were recommended by 12% to 30% of the respondees, (b) thirteen book titles were recommended by 5% to 10% of the respondees (no title was recommended by 11% of the respondees), and (c) two journal titles were also recommended by 5% to 10% of the respondees.

The five most frequently recommended book titles are as follows:

%	N	
30	22	Spache, D. & B. Spache. Reading in the elementary school. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
23	17	Harris, A. J. & R. Sipay. How to increase reading ability. New York: McKay.
19	14	Heilman, A. W. Principles and practices of teaching reading. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.
12	9	Ekwall, E. E. Locating and correcting reading difficulties. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.
12	9	Zintz, M. V. The reading process: The teacher and the learner. Dubuque, Iowa: Brown.

The following thirteen books presented in alphabetical order were recommended by between 5% and 10% of the respondees:

Aukerman, R. C. Approaches to beginning reading. New York: Wiley.

Durkin, D. Teaching them to read. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

_____. Teaching young children to read. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Ekwall, E. E. Diagnosis and remediation of the disabled reader. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Guzak, F. J. Diagnostic reading instruction in the elementary school. New York: Harper & Row.

Heilman, A. W. Phonics in proper perspective. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill.

McCracken, R. A. and M. McCracken. Reading is only the tiger's tail. San Rafael, Calif.: Lewing.

Ruddell, R. B. Reading language instruction: Innovative practices. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.

Silvaroli, N. J. Clasroom reading inventory. Dubuque, Iowa: Brown.

Smith, F. Understanding reading: A psycholinguistic analysis of reading and learning to read. New York: Harper & Row.

Spache, E. B. Reading activities for child involvement. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Stauffer, R. G. Directing the reading thinking process. New York: Harper & Row.

Van Allen, R. Language experience in communication. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Finally, the following two periodicals (alphabetical order) were listed by 5% to 10% of the respondees:

Language Arts (formerly Elementary English). National Council of Teachers of English.

The Reading Teacher. International Reading Association.

The remaining 98 titles were recommended from but one to three times, that is, they were listed by less than 5% of the respondees.

It should be noted that several of the respondees did not limit themselves to recommending titles of books and periodicals. Four of the respondees suggested that the teacher obtain activity books, children's literature, anthology, an IRA comprehensive membership, and the periodicals of the Wisconsin R & D Center. Additionally, one respondee felt the survey was inappropriate and said so:

> This is, at best ridiculous. If they have had an opportunity to become educated persons as well as trained teachers, they will be actively seeking out books and journals that meet their personal and professional needs. If they have simply been trained as teachers rather than given an opportunity to become educated, self-actualized human beings, they will be actively avoiding anything that looks like a reading list.
>
> Please stop by the education shelves in a larger bookstore sometime and you will note that everything under the sun can be categorized as Education. Lists of the type that you are proposing can have value only when suggested on a one-to-one basis and when based on the interest, strength and weaknesses of each person.
>
> Let me finish by adding that a very real and worthwhile evaluation of teacher training programs could be based on student response to the question: "What books do you plan on reading during the coming year?"

The preceeding response was typed in capital letters and red ink.

Discussion

Since the survey which was to provide recommendations upon which to base a minimal professional library in elementary reading instruction has produced a list of twenty titles, the effort might be deemed a success. However, it must be qualified with the knowledge that none of the titles were recommended by more than 30% of the reading program directors or their designated agents, and, indeed, one respondee felt the survey was inappropriate. The lack of unanimity among the reading experts might have been anticipated for Schall & Leeds (1975) found that fourteen elementary education professors recommended 149 different titles, with only thirty receiving more than one mention.

Within the framework of the results and the limitations, the following comparisons and analyses seem reasonable:

(1) The five most frequently mentioned titles were those of books in at least their second editions. Indeed, the Spache & Spache text is in its fourth and Harris & Sipay is in its sixth. Also four of the top five can be categorized as comprehensive methods texts, while one is obviously an idea book. The composition of the top-five-list is not similar to that of the previously mentioned NCTE list.

(2) Application of Fry's readability formula and extended graph ( ) to one randomly selected page per hundred pages of text within each of the five most frequently mentioned books led to the following: Spache & Spache $\bar{X}$ = 11.4, range 7-16; Harris & Sipay $\bar{X}$ = 11,8, range 8-17+; Heilman $\bar{X}$ = 11.3, range 8-13; Ekwall $\bar{X}$ = 9.0, range 6-13; and

Zintz $\bar{X}$ = 12.2, range 9-14. The average Fry readability scores of the books on top-five-list seem to indicate that a teacher need have reading ability of a high school graduate, i.e., twelfth grade, in order to understand most of the text.

(3) A content analysis of one or more of the five most frequently mentioned books is logical, and indeed, Falk (1977) has announced that such an analysis of both Spache & Spache's and Harris & Sipay's textbooks has taken place. In fact, Falk has stated that 300 propositions, assumptions and key principles have been identified.

(4) The books listed on the next-thirteen-list seem to reflect the range of topics one might feel essential to a minimal professional library in reading instruction. Note that one can find, among other things, information about the teaching of young children, the disabled reader, phonics, language experience, psycholinguistics, reading activities, and a variation of the informal reading inventory.

In light of the survey results and the related comparisons and analyses, it seems reasonable to conclude that recommendations for a minimal professional library in elementary reading instruction based on the results of this survey would be different from recommendations based on the NCTE list, would require the reader to possess at least twelfth grade reading ability, and would not be limited to the top-five-list. In addition, it is hoped that all recommendations would be made in terms of the individual's background and present circumstances.

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